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1968

# Convicts aiding the Blind



The Volunteers of Vacaville, who assemble the Beep Baseball, have a long history of service to the visually handicapped. This non-profit group of inmates of the California Medical Facility have served the visually handicapped since 1960 in tape recording textbooks and other materials, braille repair and other services. A brochure describing the organization is available from the address on the back page.

Although they are located in a state prison, the Volunteers of Vacaville receive no funds from the state and rely entirely on public donations to continue their work.

# History of Beep Baseball...

Beep Baseball began with a request from a school for the blind in Colorado Springs, Colorado for a ball that the students could find when playing among themselves. Charlie Fairbanks, a Mountain Bell Telephone employee with electronics experience, designed the first audio softball in 1964. Another telephone company employee, Vernon Grimes, also contributed to the design of the ball in respect to durability, weight, and balance.



A service organization of active and retired telephone employees are the original sponsors of Beep Baseball for the sightless. The organization, the Telephone Pioneers of America, displayed the Beep Baseball at their 1969 Assembly. The result was the adoption of Beep Ball activity by many Pioneer chapters.

The idea for using the audio ball in a competitive game was Ralph Rock's, a Pacific Telephone employee and also a Telephone Pioneer. In 1971, Rock created the game for all ages and both sexes. With safety in

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## HISTORY (continued). . .

mind, Rock modified the normal rules of Baseball slightly to eliminate the possibility of two players colliding. But, at the same time, he retained as many of the regular ways of playing baseball as possible so that the flavor and excitement of America's national sport can be shared by the sightless.

Rock put together rules (see the following pages), designed a new baseball diamond, wrote safety regulations, and put together protective gear such as face and chest protectors.

The first game of Pioneer "Beep Baseball for the Sightless" was played in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park in April 1972. Since then teams have been organized throughout the country and in foreign nations. In November, 1975, the first national confrontation was held, appropriately enough, in Golden Gate Park between the East and West, when a team from Minneapolis-St. Paul won over a team from San Francisco.

The game grew so rapidly that by 1974 Rock, by then Commissioner of Beep Baseball, needed a reliable source of Beep Baseballs. He and Lou Marracci, President of the Ladd Chapter of Telephone Pioneers, approached the Volunteers of Vacaville about the possibility of the Volunteers assembling the balls. He had heard of this group of prison inmates and their long service to the visually handicapped, who were one of the largest producers of recorded material for the visually handicapped and other services.



The Volunteers agreed, and by October 1974 they had begun production of the balls and the bases for the game.

Since then they have produced thousands of the balls, and Rock was pleasantly surprised at the results. Over a dozen major design changes were made by the Volunteers until an almost indestructible ball was produced. The Volunteers have made possible the game at a fraction of the cost it would have otherwise have been.

Ralph Rock has said of the group, "Beep Baseball and sports for the visually handicapped have come a long way. The Beep Baseball Volunteers are the heart of the program; in fact, without them there would be no program. Through their inventiveness they have greatly increased the quality of the ball without increasing the production cost. We are all very proud of them."

The George S. Ladd Chapter of the Telephone Pioneers were so impressed with the work of the Volunteers that they presented them with the first Beep Baseball award; it was presented at the First Annual East-West Game of Beep Baseball.

The Volunteers have gone into other areas of sports equipment for the visually handicapped, including Nerf balls and Beep Bowling. Beep Bowling was the invention of the first Beep baseball Production Supervisor, Frank Krayser.

The ball, and the game, have come a long way since it started, thanks in large part to the Volunteers.

# rules of the game...

## **The Rules in Brief**

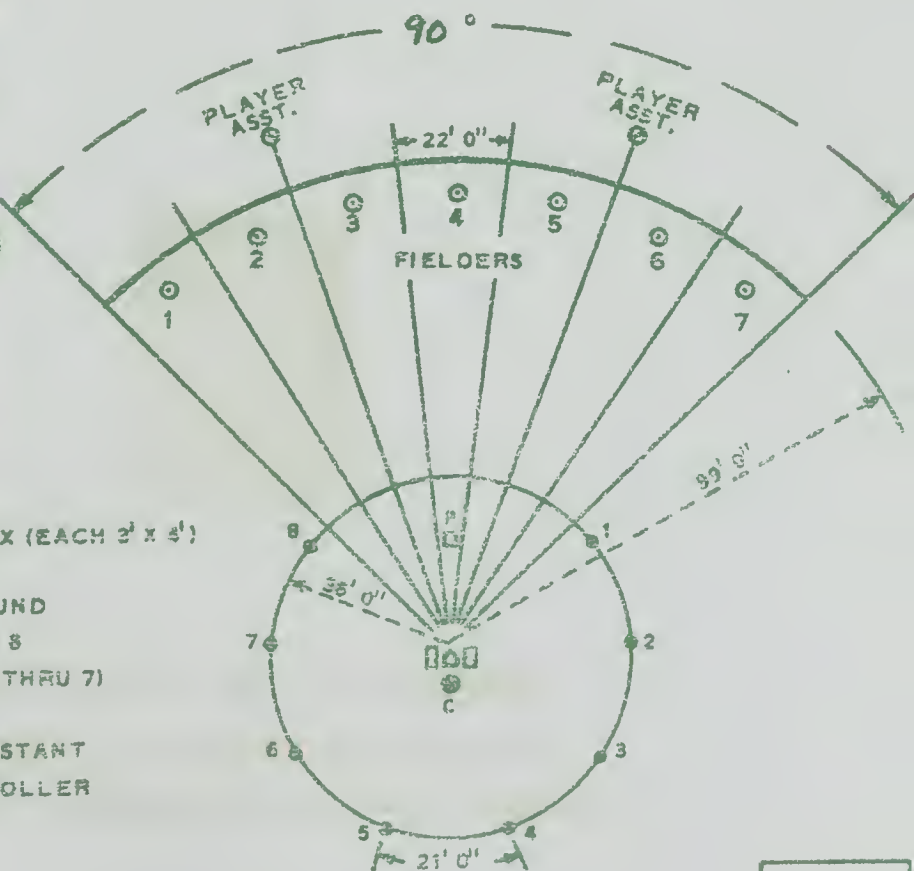
The sighted pitcher is the Chief Umpire calling “runs” and “outs”. He also pitches the “Beep Ball” to the player at bat. The batter listens for the “beep-beep” sound of the ball, and swings at the sound. He has five strikes at the ball before he is out. Four outs retire the side. A sighted catcher serves to escort the players to and from the bench and also to receive the pitches.

When the batter hits the ball, the sighted Game Controller activates the sound (a continuous “b-e-e-p” in any one of the eight bases (safety cones equipped with speakers). When he hears that sound, the batter heads for that base.

Hearing the base, the fielders will know the ball is in play. A sighted Player Assistant calls out the fielder's number nearest the ball, and he then locates it by sound. If the fielder finds the ball before the batter reaches the base, the batter is out. If the batter reaches the base before the fielder finds the ball, the batter scores a run.

If the fielder catches a ball on the fly, the side is automatically retired.

# Beeping Ball Baseball Field



- ■ BATTERS BOX (EACH 3' X 4')
- △ HOME BASE
- PITCHER MOUND
- BASE 1 THRU 8
- ⊙ FIELDERS (1 THRU 7)
- CATCHER
- ⊙ PLAYER ASSISTANT
- G GAME CONTROLLER



## VOLUNTEERS OF VACAVILLE

P.O. Box 670, Vacaville, CA 95688

"serving the visually handicapped since 1960. . ."